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Wesley R. Habley

## Carpe Diem

### A LOOK AT THE FUTURE OF NACADA AND ADVISING

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*Wes Habley, the immediate past president of NACADA, gave the following address on October 12, 1987, at the business luncheon of the 11th National Conference on Academic Advising. In addition to his presidency, Wes served as NACADA treasurer from 1981 to 1985. He was director of the Advisement Center at Illinois State University from 1975 to 1981, director of academic and career advising at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire from 1981 to 1985, and is currently associate director of the ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices.*

*The text of this speech has been edited for publication purposes.*

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Although many of you know that I do not envision myself as a classical scholar, the organizational anchor for my remarks is found in the Latin term **Carpe Diem**. I am sure that in this audience there is immediate recognition of the term **diem**, meaning day. We in higher education have become accustomed to receiving a per diem allowance when we travel. This allowance is usually enough to allow us to sample the culinary delights of places like McDonald's, Arby's, or Wendy's . . . **OR** . . . if we decide to splurge our entire per diem on just one meal, we may even take in a Denny's or a Ponderosa!

The other Latin word, **Carpe**, is less familiar. **Carpe** means seize . . . and **carpe diem** means "SEIZE THE DAY" . . . to take advantage of . . . to strike while the iron is hot . . . to make hay while the sun shines.

I personally cannot think of a term that better characterizes NACADA, its leaders, **and** its members than the term **carpe diem** . . . seize the day. Throughout our short history, NACADA has been blessed with individuals who have seized the day and, in doing so, have contributed immeasurably to this dynamic, growing, **and** serving organization.

Let me give you just a few examples of how individuals have seized the day. As early as 1975, Toni Trombley had a goal to convene a national forum on the topic of academic advising, which led her to "seize" the initiative to establish such a forum. Toni realized that a goal without a plan could be no more than a dream, and, as a result, she worked to make her goal a reality. It was just ten years ago this week, when, on October 16, 1977, in Burlington, Vermont, Toni Trombley convened the first National Conference on Academic Advising. The conference was attended by 275 participants, a number which far exceeded expectations and far exceeded the capacity of the facilities . . . more than 50 potential participants were turned away. In just ten short years, the National Conference has traveled from Burlington to San Jose, from Asheville to Seattle, and now to Chicago, where we greet nearly 1,000 participants.

Fortuitously, and almost as if issuing a challenge to conference participants, Toni chose to call the Burlington enclave the **first** national conference on academic advising. Before long, that challenge was answered when Frank Dyer and Carl Chando of Memphis State University agreed to host the second national conference which drew 360 participants. At that conference, the Association Steering committee appointed a Task Force on Organizational Structure, led by Mike McCauley, which hammered out the association by-laws leading to our charter in the spring of 1979. . . . Only eighteen months after the first National Conference on Academic Advising, the National Academic Advising Association was born with a charter membership of 429 individuals. *Carpe Diem* . . . "seize the day!"

Other examples of NACADA's rapid response to member needs include:

- Billie Jacobini's dedication to establishing the NACADA Newsletter in 1979. She served as our newsletter editor for five years.
- Ed Jones's insistence that a function as important as academic advising required a high-quality journal. Too new as an association? Too small to support a journal? **NONSENSE!!** In 1981, just two years after our charter, Ed Jones edited the first NACADA *Journal*.
- In 1984, the NACADA Board, sensing that one of the major needs for academic advising was national recognition, entered into a collaborative and highly visible program for identifying outstanding academic advisors and exemplary institutional advising programs.
- And also in 1984, knowing that many individuals were unable to afford the time or the money to attend a national conference, we began a program of regional conferences, which in the spring of 1987 drew more than 1,000 participants.

**AND.** . . NACADA is an Association that continues to seize the day!

- On Wednesday, we will announce the **first** recipients of member scholarships for graduate study, scholarships that are based on the Board's realization that many of our members could benefit from such a program.

Knowing that advising must have a strong research base to support its existence, on that same Wednesday morning, we will announce the **first** recipients of our Research Support Program.

But enough of NACADA's history. The theme of this address is *carpe diem* not NACADA's history. To return to that theme, I pose two questions to you. First, where would NACADA be today without individuals who are willing to seize the initiative? The second question is where would **advising be today** without individuals who were willing to seize the initiative?

To me, the answers to those questions are relatively simple. Without those individuals there would be no NACADA as we know it. There would be, at best, a disjointed network of individuals interested in advising. There would be few, if any, professional development activities for advising personnel. There would be only limited focus on what Ernest Boyer has called "one of the weakest links in the undergraduate experience."

To paraphrase Robert F. Kennedy, "Some see things as they are and ask why? Others dream things that never were and say, why **not?**" To all those who have dreamed and said why not, to those who have taken the initiative to work on NACADA matters and, in doing so, have proven just how much NACADA matters, I convey my personal thanks!

But *carpe diem* is not only a characteristic of this Association; it is also a characteristic of many of you, its members. Members who, each in your own way, strive to improve your advising and your institutional advising program; who strive to contribute more fully to the growth and development of your students. During the past four years, the ACT/NACADA Recognition Program has provided us with sterling examples of the contributions made by individuals and institutions. In the short time since the inception of the Recognition Program, 32 individuals have received Outstanding Advisor Awards and 143 individuals have received Certificates of Merit. In addition, 83 institutions, including 23 winners and 60 Certificates of Merit, have been recognized for their outstanding institutional advising programs.

What is most astounding to me about the Recognition Program is that I know that these award winners represent only the tip of an enormous iceberg. Through my travels to conferences and campuses, I know that there are many more individuals striving to improve the quality of advising services to students than we could possibly recognize through the awards program. Most of these individuals do so with commitment and patience, knowing that the stakes are high even though the extrinsic recognition and rewards are low. They *seize the day too!!!*

So we come together, knowing that as individuals we strive to meet significant challenges each day and knowing that as an association we have met *and overcome* the most important challenges of our first decade as a professional organization.

The biggest challenges, however, are not those we have already overcome. The biggest challenges to NACADA and to advising lie dead ahead. I realize that an outgoing president is not customarily given the opportunity to set an agenda for the Association, but somehow I am *not* able to resist that temptation. I will be content, however, to identify the major challenges, and I will be smart enough to defer to our capable new leadership the development of action plans which will ensure that NACADA meets those challenges. As I see them, there are at least three major challenges facing NACADA:

- The first challenge to NACADA is maintaining its reputation as a personalized association in light of geometric growth in membership and conference participation. How will we continue our reputation as a sharing, open, and supportive association which has been so characteristic of all that we have done?

The second challenge to NACADA is finding ways to reduce our reliance on an *all-volunteer* army, that near legion of people who devote what seems to be inexhaustible energy to make sure the Association runs effectively. One of the most phenomenal elements of this Association is the fact that almost everything we have accomplished has been done by those volunteers.

The third challenge facing NACADA is ensuring that dramatic growth and program expansion do not give way to organizational rigor mortis. It has been said that once an organization ceases *to* grow, it begins to die. We must actively seek ways to continue not only our quantitative growth, but also our qualitative growth, if we are to avoid becoming just another association on the higher education scene.

I would also suggest, however, that there are at least three major challenges facing academic advising:

- First, we must establish a rapprochement, or, in some cases, negotiate a cease-fire between those who *do* advising for a living and those who do advising as part of a larger set of responsibilities. Somehow faculty members, counselors, advisors, and

administrators must find ways to forge new alliances, abandoning both provincialism and **turfism**, so that students will be best served.

Second, we must work to firmly implant a definition of academic advising as more than picking courses and getting registered. We know that in order to reach its fullest potential a much more comprehensive definition of advising must become widely accepted. We must share and defend a comprehensive definition of advising among our colleagues.

- The third challenge facing academic advising is to document the impact of quality academic advising so that there will be absolutely no doubt in a decision-maker's mind that academic advising makes a visible, significant contribution to student satisfaction and growth and that advising makes a visible and significant contribution to institutional health and well-being.

Meeting these challenges is, to say the least, a tall order. Yet, I am optimistic! For it looks to me as if the same philosophy which led to the development of NACADA and has caused us to look at the accomplishments of this Association with such great pride is as alive now as it was during the earlier days of this, our first decade.

So, I close this address, profoundly grateful for the opportunity to have served as your president, by offering just one bit of advice:

As you think about the future of NACADA and as you think about the future of advising on your campus, I hope that you all will continue to pursue the idea. *Carpe Diem . . . Pro Meliore Crastino*  
Seize the day . . . for a better tomorrow!

Editor's note: For those of us who have forgotten our high school or undergraduate Latin, Ode 11 from the First Book of Horace is reproduced below in its entirety.

*Tu ne quaesieris — scire nefas — quem mihi, quem tibi finem di  
dederint, Leuconoë, nec Babylonios temptaris numeros. Ut melius  
quicquid erit pati, seu plures hiemes, seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam,  
quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare Tyrrhenum. Sapias,  
vina liques, et spatio brevi spem longam reseces. Dum loquimur,  
fugerit invida aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.*